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Toothbrushes, or Claiming Coffee

By Chelsea Elwood

Steam pushes from coffee
levers and whirligigs in my
stomach and ears, momentum
thumping, whirring around
around. I hear you
shift, cough, settle.

I pour and let it settle.
The coffee
needs creamer so I stir. You
are still in bed when I replace my
toothbrush above your sink, swirl water around
around the coffee pot, cleaning it for a moment,

steam and drip staccato tangos bridging moments.
You're usually still sleeping when I leave, settled
in bed. I claim moving around
your kitchen, around morning habits and coffee
with stealth and no sound. But my
pants zipper up, bedroom door shuts. You

don't notice when I leave, but maybe when you reach across
your
bed for me. I like – I need coffee moments
bridged in steam, temporary connections my
schedule doesn't allow. Maybe I'll settle
accounts, start making coffee
elsewhere, at home, maybe. Around

there, I can preset the coffee maker to start around

my alarm. I would be the only one in my bed and you
would be the same. I don't think you drink coffee
when I'm not here. There are moments
I think you'd like to, but then you settle
back, sigh and sleep again. My

inclination is to trace my
lips on your cheek, around
your mouth, and settle
against your
neck. I know you sleep through these moments
bridging you to me to coffee,

you and coffee connecting. I won't leave.
I'll settle here. My day can wait for me to replace my toothbrush
and coffee around, around the drain, downwards momentum.